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# Inside Information

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## U. OF NEBRASKA/NEBRASKA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S 'AGNET' CEASING OPERATIONS

As of December 19, AGNET, a pioneer of on-line electronic services, will cease operations after 13 years.

In 1975, the University of Nebraska College of Agriculture and the Nebraska Cooperative Extension service added computers with interactive capabilities to campus and field offices. The service became self-supporting by 1981.

At its peak, with more than 1,000 paid users and a network including the Dakotas, Montana, and Wyoming, AGNET provided farmers and ranchers access to new markets through electronic marketing bulletin boards for hay, crops, and PIK certificates.

The service is being discontinued due to a drop in subscriptions, rising cost and time of maintaining programs, and competition from other services.

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## USDA COMMUNICATORS BECOME OFFICERS OF NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ORGANIZATION

Stan Prochaska, chief of the Special Programs Division in USDA's Office of Information, has been named the new president of the National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC).

He served as vice president for administration and president-elect in 1988.

Prochaska is a charter member of NAGC, which was established in 1976 as a national organization for those in communication fields within national, state and local governments. This includes writers, editors, broadcasters, graphic and video artists and producers, public affairs officers and specialists.

"Anyone involved in any field that has anything to do with dissemination of information within and outside the government is invited to be a member," said Prochaska.

Two other USDA communicators and one former USDA communicator also were elected to serve as 1989 officers of NAGC.

Marci Hilt, public affairs specialist with the Radio & Television Division in the Office of Information, will be vice president for programs. She was the chairperson for NAGC's 1988 annual conference held in Washington, DC.

Russell Forte, public affairs specialist with the Special Programs Division of OI, was elected as treasurer. Forte is currently serving his second year of a 2-year stint as a director on the board of the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE).

Lew Brodsky, former director of information for USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and now public affairs director for the Selective Service System, was elected to serve as a director on the NAGC board.

Other 1989 NAGC officers will be: Vice president for administration--Madeleine Jacobs, public affairs director for the Smithsonian Institution; secretary--Barbara Gordon, public affairs director for the City of Falls Church, VA, (daughter of Dan Lutz, news editor for the Institute of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska); and directors--Gail Cleere, public affairs officer, U.S. Naval Observatory, Washington, DC; Cynthia Dorfman, editor, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, and Jim Carroll, information officer, Kentucky Tourism Cabinet, Frankfort, KY.

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USDA had the largest number of any federal department in attendance at the organization's recent national conference. The conference was attended by about 180 federal, state and local government participants from 23 states and the District of Columbia. Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Kentucky led the states in participants. Even Alaska had a contingency.

The 1989 NAGC conference is set for December 6-8 at the Rosslyn Westpark Hotel in Arlington, VA, the same site used in recent years.

12/21

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#### AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATORS IN EDUCATION (ACE) PLANNING ANNUAL WORKSHOP

D.C. Region officers of the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) and committees from USDA's Office of Information and other USDA agencies are busy planning the annual ACE-OI Spring Workshop to be held May 18-19, in Washington, D.C. More information about the workshop in later issues of INSIDE INFORMATION.

The ACE D.C. Region held its annual holiday luncheon on December 19 in USDA's Administration Building.

The event was attended by over 100 communicators, USDA information directors, and others including potential new members.

In keeping with the holiday spirit, ACE contributed \$200 worth of food to Mitch Snyder's Center for Creative Non-Violence for distribution to the homeless.

12/21

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#### CLEMSON UNIV. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE OFFERS WEATHER ADVISORY SOFTWARE

A new sophisticated computer weather program for farmers has been created by Clemson University's Cooperative Extension Service agricultural meteorologists.

The Weather Advisory Guidance, known as WAG, is a computer program using basic weather forecast data from the National Weather Service and local reports to help farmers make management decisions.

The interactive program will give weather forecasts for 24-hour periods spanning five days.

Copies of WAG are available free to anyone sending a 5.5-inch floppy computer disc to: Clemson Agricultural Weather Office, 137 McAdams Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634. Telephone is 803-656-3465.

12/22

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#### USDA'S RADIO & TV DIVISION PROVIDES HISTORICAL FIRST WITH GATT COVERAGE

On December 5, a historical first for USDA was achieved by its Radio & TV Division (R&TV) in USDA's Office of Information (OI), according to Vic Powell, R&TV chief. GATT TV coverage in Montreal, Canada, marked the first time that a USDA report was transmitted to TV stations via satellite from a foreign country.

R&TV's Lynn Wyvill and Debbie Janifer produced daily TV coverage Monday through Thursday from the GATT meeting in Montreal. Items were fed from the Palace de Congress to Westar IV satellite and transmitted unscrambled to stations and home satellite systems across the nation. The three-person TV

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crew of Wyvill, Janifer, and Ron Anderson from OI's Video and Teleconference Division, was assisted by a contract video editor in Montreal.

Brenda Curtis, R&TV, provided radio coverage. She produced reports on a wide range of activity at GATT, knowing where to be at the right time to get the major statements by delegates and representatives. Technical support was provided at USDA studios by R&TV's Gary Crawford who edited material and assembled it for the daily news service.

12/22

## USDA/FDA CONFERENCES OFFER LATEST WORD ON FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION

Who is to blame for most of our food-borne illnesses -- consumers or manufacturers? What country has the safest food supply? And, how much does food poisoning cost us each year?

The 200 journalists and information multipliers who attended the 1988 Journalists' Conferences on Food Safety and Nutrition recently held in Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, Calif., now know the answers to those questions.

According to the USDA's Consumer Advisor Ann Chadwick, topics at the conferences included:

- food safety, nutrition and new technologies;
- safety of drug residues;
- how consumers can protect themselves from microbiological hazards;
- how well our food choices meet our nutrition needs;
- nutrition and aging;
- dietary supplement use;
- what puzzles people about food;
- what consumers should know about new food products and packaging; and
- foods of the future.

In addition, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Ewen M. Wilson discussed consumer sovereignty in the marketplace, following the introduction of the 1988 Yearbook of Agriculture, "Marketing U.S. Agriculture."

The "Beagle Brigade" from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service had representatives at both conferences -- APHIS handler Hal Fingerhman put "Jackpot" through his paces in Washington, D.C., and APHIS handler Mel Robles used "Dr. Watson" to demonstrate in San Francisco. Both dogs showed how they react when they find prohibited fruit and meat in baggage at international airports.

"This is the fifth year we've held these conferences," Chadwick said. "And each year we've had a more positive response from attendees. We designed the conferences to bring USDA and FDA policy makers, scientists and experts to journalists who might not normally have access to them.

"This year's conferences once again provided opportunities for government officials and journalists to get to know each other better in a non-crisis situation," she said. "They also help reporters learn which government agency is responsible for which programs."

USDA agencies again offered action-oriented exhibits during morning and afternoon breaks.

Cooperative State Research Service and the State Agricultural Experiment Stations featured a number of new products and foods. Food Safety and Inspection Service had two exhibits this year -- one on "new" food packaging and the other featuring the new "quick tests" meat and poultry inspectors use to spot

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residues, species substitutions and other problems. Extension Service offered their new publication, "Complete Guide to Home Canning."

Economic Research Service demonstrated where food dollars go; USDA's Office of Information demonstrated the USDA Online service; Human Nutrition Information Service offered to analyze what attendees ate the day before for calories, 27 nutrients and food components; and the National Agricultural Library showed attendees how to use AGRICOLA.

The U.S. General Services Administration's Consumer Information Center exhibited a wide range of consumer publications.

A variety of media representatives attended the conferences, including the WALL STREET JOURNAL, WASHINGTON POST, READER'S DIGEST, FARM JOURNAL, THE PACKER, GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, NEW WOMAN, CONSUMER REPORTS, MILWAUKEE JOURNAL, GLAMOUR, NEW YORK TIMES, MADEMOISELLE, REUTERS, ASSOCIATED PRESS, L.A. TIMES, and BON APPETIT. Freelance writers also attended, as well as reporters from food and nutrition newsletters.

Conference coordinators were: Chadwick; Marilyn Stephenson of FDA; and Sally Michael, Marci Hilt and Sally Katt of USDA's Office of Information.

Oh, yes. The answers to the questions are: Consumers, not manufacturers. The home is the most likely place for food contamination; the U.S. has the safest food supply in the world; and there are between 20 million and 40 million reported cases of food poisoning annually in this country, which costs in medical bills, lost wages and product recalls as high as \$10 billion.

12/23

#### UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA'S DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS AG TV PRODUCER

The Department of Communications, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is seeking a creative producer to host and produce a weekly lawn and garden program on Nebraska ETV Network, prepare TV and radio news clips, and other broadcast assignments.

Qualifications include a Bachelors degree and at least two years of experience in radio and TV production. On-camera news, editing and production experience also is required. Live on-air directing experience is desirable.

Salary is \$19,000. Submit resume, three letters of reference and video audiotape showing on-camera abilities and production experience by January 20 to Gary L. Vacin, Department of Agricultural Communications, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0918.

12/23



# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING COMMUNICATION EVENTS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Jan. 7-10:

70th AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION ANNUAL MEETING

San Antonio, Texas

Contact: AFBF, 312-823-1010

Jan. 17-May 5:

EFFECTIVE DESIGN FOR DESKTOP PUBLISHING (One-day Workshop)

Washington, DC, (Apr. 20) & 17 other cities, coast-to-coast - \$285 Fee

Contact: Ragan Communications Workshops, 312-922-8267 or 312-922-0854

Jan. 23-24:

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC AFFAIRS & PUBLIC RELATIONS: BASIC PRICIPLES, PRACTICES  
and WRITING & EDITING SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE PUBLICATIONS

Barbizon Hotel, New York, New York (\$595 fee for either seminar)

Contact: NYU/PRSA PR Program, 212-682-1435

Feb. 1-June 23:

Other Ragan Communications Workshops (ADVANCED WRITING & INTERVIEWING,  
ADVANCED WRITING & EDITING TECHNIQUES, SPEECHWRITING FOR RESULTS,  
4-DAY WRITER'S RETREAT, POWERFUL DESIGN IDEAS FOR NEWSLETTERS, more)

From Boston to San Francisco, from Minneapolis to Houston

Contact: Ragan Communications Workshops, 312-922-8267 or 312-922-0854

Feb. 6-7:

SOUTHERN AG COMMUNICATORS WORKSHOP

86th Annual Meeting of Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists

Nashville, Tennessee

Contact: SAAS, \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*get correct phone no. from Denver\*

Feb. 8-10:

AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING

Westward Look Resort, Tucson, Arizona

Contact: Paul Weller, ARC Exec. Sec., 202-785-6710

May 9-11:

10th ANNUAL NATIONAL ONLINE MEETING

Sheraton Centre Hotel, New York, New York

Contact: Learned Information Inc., 609-654-6266

May 18-19:

ANNUAL DC REGION ACE-OI SPRING WORKSHOP

Washington, D.C.

Contact: Denver Browning, 202-447-2058

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